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IMRAN'S TOUGH CHALLENGE TO SHARIF

Early trends in Pakistan's general election suggest independents supported by Imran Khan's PTI were posing a tough challenge to PML-N candidates in Punjab. Voting began at 8 am and closed at 5 pm. Counting is on and the full results are expected by Friday. Four policemen were killed at a polling station leading to delay in the voting process. Polling was postponed in one seat | **P12**

Government of India
Modi Sarkar ki
Guarantee
Scan for more information
India becoming world's manufacturing hub
Over 200 mobile manufacturing units in the country now as compared to two in 2014; India is the second largest mobile manufacturing country in the world
Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

SAYING IT IN BLACK & WHITE

Govt document alleges UPA rule ruined economy

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

THE Narendra Modi-led government on Thursday released a white paper on the Indian economy, loaded with the political message that the Congress-led UPA government considerably weakened the country's economy during its 10-year rule from 2004-14 whereas the NDA government revived it through reforms and action-oriented policies.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the white paper in Parliament on Thursday, a week after she made the promise in her Budget speech on February 1. The paper attacked the UPA government for its failure in managing the economy, which it said was in sound health in 2004. The white paper sought to highlight the inefficiencies of the Manmohan Singh-led government, such as lack of leadership that triggered a policy paralysis, project delays, and unprecedented scams.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament | PTI

Brought out just before the general elections, the white paper cherry-picked data and quotes of experts to attack the UPA government for mismanaging public finances, creating a banking crisis, and making India externally vulnerable.

The paper termed the banking crisis of 2014 as massive with gross bad loan levels touching as high as 12.3% of the advances 'largely because of political interference by the UPA government in the commercial lending decisions of public sector banks'. It pointed out the gross advances by PSU banks were ₹6.6 lakh crore in March 2004, but ballooned to ₹39 lakh crore by March 2012.

The paper cited RBI reports to show the UPA government showcased poor policy planning and execution. The 54-page document also elaborated the measures taken by the NDA government since it came to power in 2014 to fix the economic crisis.

Congress counter flags unemployment, injustice

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

IN a counter to the government's white paper, the Congress on Thursday released a 'black paper', also of 54 pages, highlighting what it termed the social, economic, and political 'injustices' committed by the Narendra Modi government in its 10-year rule. Titled *10 Saal Anyay Kal* and released by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, the document claims that in the past 10 years, the Modi government has "devastated the country's economy, aggravated unemployment, destroyed the agricultural sector, abetted crimes against women, and committed grave injustices against minorities".

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge showing the 'black paper' on the BJP govt to media persons | SHEKHAR YADAV

The document said the BJP rule has witnessed the highest unemployment rate in 45 years. "Total unemployment was 1 crore in 2012 but it rose to about 4 crore in 2022. 10 lakh sanctioned central government posts remain unfilled. The unemployment rate for graduates and postgraduates is about 33%. This is why engineers are becoming coolies and PhDs are applying for railway jobs," it said.

It added that the Modi government's tenure has seen an unprecedented reduction in incomes. "The NSSO data that the PM suppressed shows consumer spending falling for the first time since 1973, from ₹1,501 in 2011-12 to ₹1,446 in 2017-18." It said prices of essential commodities are at all-time high. "Blunders like demonetisation and a poorly-designed GST completely derailed the economy and destroyed job-generating small businesses."

Farmers were promised double income, but got pathetic MSP increases and three farm laws were railroaded through Parliament to enrich the PM's corporate cronies, it added.

Crimes against SC and ST communities shot up 48% in 2022 compared to 2013, the document added.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah receives petitions during the Janaspandana event at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Thursday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

SHOWS FAILURE OF GOVT: BJP

BJP leaders said Janaspandana was not a big achievement as it showed that the government failed to resolve issues of common people | **P4**

Siddu's Janaspandana 2.0 a huge hit with 11K grievances

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Siddaramaiah's 'Janaspandana 2.0', directly seeking to redress the grievances of the needy, received an overwhelming response with over 11,000 registrations and about 20,000 people thronging Vidhana Soudha here on Thursday.

Seeing the response, Siddaramaiah instructed the officials concerned to resolve the problems within a month's time.

'Janaspandana 2.0' witnessed double the grievances compared to 'Janaspandana 1.0' which was held at his official residence 'Krishna' on November 27, drawing over 4,000 registrations and the CM claiming to have resolved 98 per cent of them with only about 200 applications remaining.

Many among the aggrieved came directly to 'Janaspandana 2.0' by bypassing their respective local authorities who should have actually solved their problems, but had not. The people came with the hope of earliest resolution of their long-pending problems through the direct approach that 'Janaspandana 2.0' offered.

The grievances ranged from financial assistance against health care to change of khata of lands.

CONTINUED ON: P4

MALDIVES ISSUE

Indian troops to be replaced with civilians

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

AMID bilateral talks with Maldives to resolve the issue of 88 Indian military personnel stationed in the archipelago, the foreign office on Thursday said they will be replaced with civilians. "The present military personnel will be replaced by competent Indian technical personnel," said Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal in response to a query from this paper. Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu has been harping on the withdrawal of the 88 military personnel who are primarily attached to operating one helicopter and two Dornier aircraft India had gifted. The planes are used for medical evacuation and rescue operations.

WITH THIS ISSUE
CITY'S BEST WEEKEND GUIDE INDULGE 42 PAGES, INCLUDING 24 OF INDULGE (TABLOID)

INTEREST RATE UNCHANGED

Reserve Bank left the key policy rate unchanged at 6.5% for the sixth time. Cost of borrowings for both individuals and corporates may remain stable | **P13**

EXPRESS READ

Ban on liquor sale in city from Feb 14-16

Bengaluru: The City Police Commissioner has banned sale of liquor from the eve of February 14 to February 16 night in view of elections to the Legislative Council from Bangalore Teachers' Constituency. The ban will also be in force on February 20 in view of counting of votes | **P2**

Free border travel accord with Myanmar goes to the shredder

MUKESH RANJAN @ New Delhi

UNION Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday announced the government's decision to scrap the Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the borders with Myanmar so as to ensure the country's security and the demography of Northeastern states. In a social media post on X, Shah said the Ministry of External Affairs is currently in the process of scrapping it after the Ministry of Home Affairs recommended its immediate suspension.

The FMR was last amended in 2016 to allow citizens of both India and Myanmar living near the border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without documents as part of the Act East Policy.

Shah made the announcement two days after the decision to fence the entire 1,643 km India-Myanmar border, which passes through Mizoram (510 km), Manipur (398 km), Nagaland (215 km) and Arunachal Pradesh (520 km).

Fencing has been a persistent demand of the Imphal valley-based Meitei groups, which have been alleging that tribal militants often enter India through the porous border. They also allege that narcotics are being smuggled in through the unfenced border.

Shah had on Tuesday said besides fencing, a patrol track will also be paved to facilitate better surveillance. Two pilot projects of fencing through a hybrid surveillance system are under execution, he added.

In July last, the Manipur government claimed that around 700 illegal immigrants had entered the state. Mizoram has also had an influx of anti-junta rebels in thousands since the military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021. Several thousand refugees are living in different parts of Mizoram since the coup.

N-E CMS HAPPY, TRIBAL GROUPS SORE

While chief ministers of BJP-ruled states in the Northeast welcomed the decision, tribal groups opposed it saying these actions would further divide the region's various ethnic communities which have sizeable populations in Myanmar

K'taka saw 72% decline in startup funding in '23

UMA KANNAN @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA, which is home to more than 18,000 startups, has been witnessing a significant decline in funding.

In 2023, tech startups in the state received only $3.4 billion funding, which is a 72% plunge from $12.2 billion it raised in 2022, and an 83% decline from $20.4 billion raised in 2021, reveals data from market intelligence firm Tracxn.

It received $2.3 billion late-stage funding in 2023, which again is a decline of 73% compared to $8.9 billion received in 2022 and 87% drop compared to $17.3 billion received in 2021. For many quarters now, startups across the country are struggling to raise funds due to macroeconomic headwinds and geopolitical issues.

"Karnataka's significant drop in startup funding, particularly in Bengaluru, can be attributed to increased investor caution and concerns about valuations," said Somdutta Singh, Serial Entrepreneur, Founder and CEO Assiduus Global Inc, LP Angel Investor.

"The global economy faces challenges stemming from Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas conflicts, which have disrupted the global supply chain and trade prospects. Further, monetary policy tightening has dampened aggregate demand, leading to a downturn in FDI," he said.

CONTINUED ON: P5

Karnataka's significant drop in startup funding can be attributed to increased investor caution and concerns about valuations

Somdutta Singh, Founder and CEO Assiduus Global

TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC NOTICE
KIND ATTENTION : VEHICLE OWNERS

As per the Government of Karnataka Notification No.TD 193 TDO 2021, Dated : **17-08-2023** and Circular No.CT/RGN-1/PR-434/ 2022-23, Dated : **18-08-2023** issued by the Commissioner for Transport and Road Safety, Bangalore, affixation of HIGH SECURITY REGISTRATION PLATES (HSRP) is mandatory on all vehicles (Two & Three wheelers, Light Motor Vehicles, Passenger Cars, Medium & Heavy Commercial Vehicles, Trailer, Tractor etc.,) in the State of Karnataka registered (old / existing vehicles) prior to 1st April 2019.

IND KA 00 G 0000

PROCESS FLOW FOR AFFIXATION OF HSRP ON OLD VEHICLES

- Visit https://transport.karnataka.gov.in OR www.siam.in and click on Book HSRP.
- Select your vehicle manufacturer.
- Fill basic vehicle details.
- Select dealer location as per your convenience for affixation of HSRP.
- Pay HSRP fee online. No payment to be made in cash.
- An OTP will be sent to the mobile of vehicle owner.
- Choose date and time of affixation as per your convenience.
- For affixation of HSRP, opt for office premises/home location as convenient to you.
- Visit any of your vehicle manufacturer/dealer.

IMPORTANT POINTS

- Book your HSRP only through https://transport.karnataka.gov.in OR www.siam.in
- Don't affix imitation HSRP/look alike plates/smart number plates such as with fake hologram/IND mark/INDIA inscribed or engraved from any open market/road side vendors. Those are not HSRP. (High Security Registration Plates).
- No transaction in RTO office such as change of ownership, address, HPA/HPT, fitness etc will be permitted without the affixation of HSRP.
- No fine for vehicles presenting valid HSRP receipt upto **30 days from the appointment date**.
- The time limit which was fixed upto **17-11-2023** for fitment of HSRP has been extended upto **17-02-2024** vide Government Notification No. TD 193 TDO 2021, Dated **16-11-2023.**
- Public can call the below helpline number if they face any problem to get HSRP through online, during office working hours from **10.00** am to **05.30** pm.

Contact : 94498 63429/94498 63426